

Echo

Ball may quit over eviction stalemate

7:00pm Thursday 6th October 2011

By Jon Austin

COUNCIL leader **Tony Ball** has suggested he will resign if travellers are not evicted from Dale Farm by Christmas.

Mr Ball said someone would have to be accountable if the battle to clear the illegal site of up to 80 families drags on for several weeks, and as leader it would have to be him.

Asked if bailiffs were likely to still be on standby in December, Mr Ball said: "If we are still in the same situation, then you probably won't be talking to me."

He was referring to an earlier pledge to step down if the families were not evicted from the site, and the council was to blame.

He made the frank admission as there were yet more delays at the High Court yesterday.

Mr Ball said: "If we are still in the same position, and Dale Farm is detracting from all the good work going on in **Basildon**, then someone has to be accountable. This is not about personality, and there are 28 other councillors who would do this instead of me, but as leader I am accountable."

Despite the suggestion of resignation, Mr Ball refused to put a timetable on himself.

He added: "I am not going to say a date."

"I am not going to be dictated to by protesters who have called for me to go, that would mean they have won. That is exactly what they want."

Mr Ball also revealed if Judge Mr Justice Ouseley gives the go ahead for evictions on Friday, there will not be an immediate clearance.

He said: "We have stood down the bailiffs to save money and the police have also been stood down because of costs. It will take some preparation time before the operation can resume."

In some cases the court has already ruled families will have to be given 48 hours notice before they are evicted, leading to fresh fears protesters will be able to regroup at the site.

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